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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Bulgaria

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SUBJECT The Sofia-Vratsa Roads

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1. The quickest route and the best-surfaced road between Sofia and Vratsa has been the road which branches northeastward from the Sofia-Pirdop-Karlovo highway three kilometers east of Dolni Bogrov and passes through Yana, Potop, Botevgrad, and Mezdra.
2. An alternative route leads northward along the Iskŭr River through Svoqe and Gara Lakatnik. The Kumaritsa-Gara Lakatnik section of this road had been largely built by 1945 and is now an excellent motor road which has only gentle uphill stretches and easy bends even though it is by no means level. The road is generally five meters wide and has a packed and rolled surface of earth and crushed stone which is firm, at least in dry weather. It is free from pot-holes which suggests that maintenance work has been carried out since the road was first laid down. The road meets the Iskŭr River at Kŭrilo and runs along the west bank as far as the big river bend immediately south of Rebrovo where it crosses to the east bank; it recrosses to the west bank just south of Svoqe and continues on the west bank to Gara Lakatnik. Masonry arch bridges and culverts span the streams which flow down the steep hills into the Iskŭr River. It is estimated that all bridges on this section are capable of carrying loads of at least 15 tons and probably a great deal more.
3. Generally speaking, the single-track railway line along the Iskŭr valley is located on the opposite bank from the road, that is, mostly along the east bank. At Svoqe, where the railroad and road are both on the west bank for a distance, the road narrows and deteriorates at or near the level crossing in the village and doesn't regain its normal quality until it reaches the bridge across the river south of Svoqe.
4. A direct route between Gara Lakatnik and Vratsa has been in existence for many years, but except for the first 10 kilometers which are now well constructed and have very passable bends, the road is mountainous, narrow (in some places not

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more than seven feet wide), and strewn with rocks all the way into Vratsa. It is possible to travel the road in private cars, but is dangerous when the weather is misty and the visibility bad. The road is impassable during the winter, from December to March.

5. The old cart track along the Iskŭr River between Gara Lakatnik and Mezdra has now been converted into a good motor road and will presumably soon be opened for traffic. It appears that there will be two entrances to this road at Rebarkovo-- one from the Botevgrad-Rebarkovo-Mezdra road approximately one kilometer west of Rebarkovo and the other from the Botevgrad-Mezdra road a hundred yards west of Rebarkovo. Neither junction was ready for use as of early October.
6. An entirely new stretch of road is being laid at the eastern exit from Rebarkovo toward Mezdra. Road work in that area now extends over approximately two kilometers.
7. The sketch included in this report as an appendix shows the general location of the roads described above.

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Comment: The greater part of the area under discussion in this report is forbidden to foreigners

It is felt that this road is of some strategic importance because it is the only north-south road through western Bulgaria which does not have to negotiate a fairly high pass.

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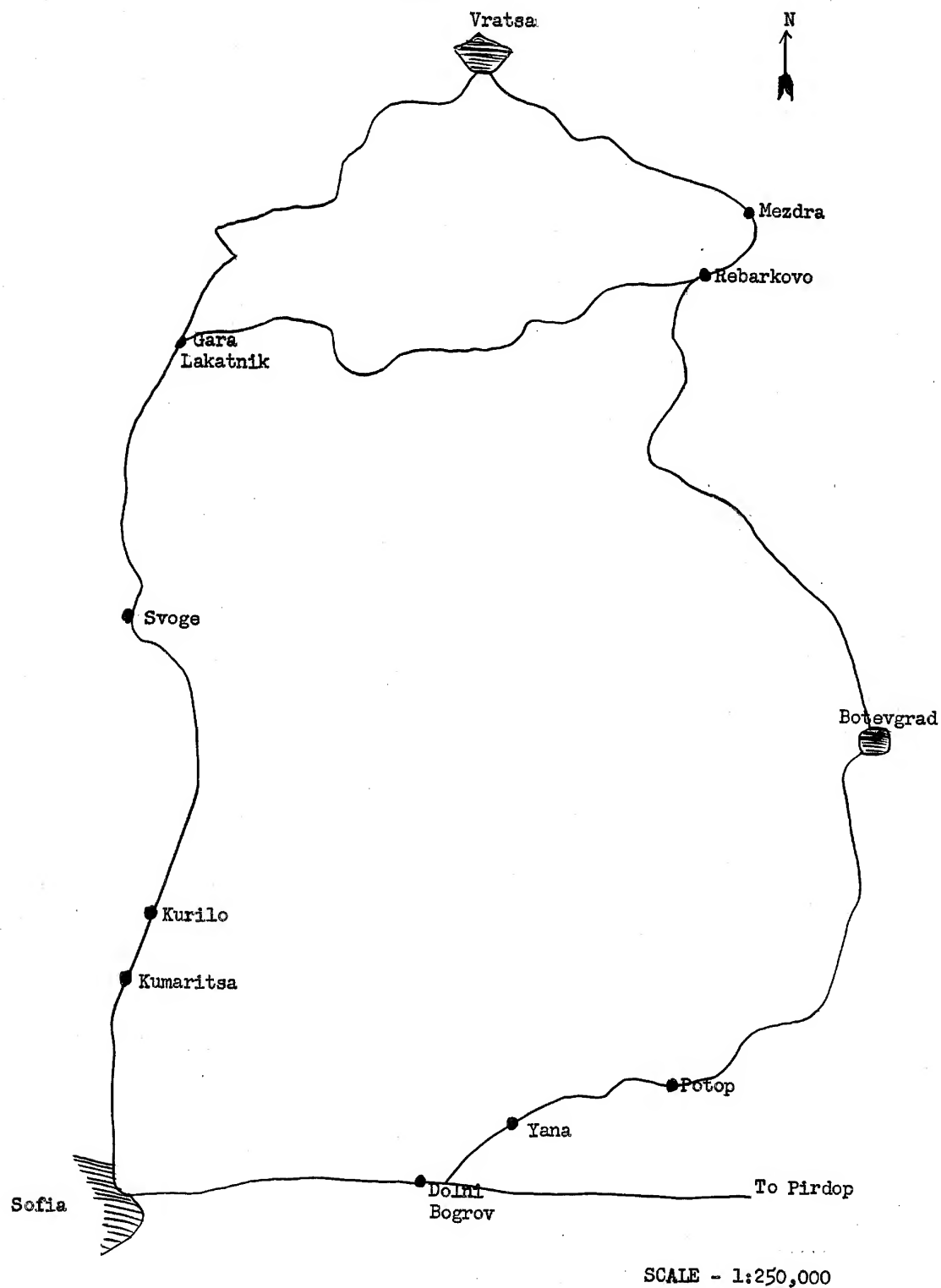
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APPENDIX: THE SOFIA-VRATSA ROADS



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